

Lent Devotional February 27, 2026

Scripture

Mark 2:13-22

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous but sinners."

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

Devotion

Dr. Rachel Pennington '24

Confession: I am a professional baker and cook. This means that I filter most things through the lens of eating, drinking, and being merry.

The directive to eat, drink, and be merry has been mishandled as nihilistic—we will all die, all is vanity, so let's enjoy it while we can. Instead, Ecclesiastes admonishes us to see food, wine, and merriment not as a means but as an end. There is something deeply spiritual in the consumption and enjoyment of that which satisfies the soul, particularly when shared together in community. Our existence is not vain, but it is fragile, stuck in a swinging pendulum of misfortune and bliss. In the midst of this, eating and drinking and being merry is a grounding force.

Jesus echoes this interpretation. He collects punks and undesirables with the simple directive "Follow Me." Follow Him to what?

To food!

Not to a service or prayer, but to consume and commune. The scribes and Pharisees, in their outrage, do not understand this intertwining of the sacred and profane. They also do not understand why Jesus isn't promoting the act of fasting. His response is that there is a time for everything. This time is to celebrate, to eat, drink, and be merry together, for the Bridegroom is with them at this moment. There will come a day for fasting and mourning, but today is about consecrated consumption.

As the owner of a pie shop that became a literal sanctuary in the wake of the 2017 events in Charlottesville, I saw how pie and espresso transformed into a eucharistic expression of the Body and blood of a community. The act of eating healed the brokenness in the wake of tragedy.

When Jesus says "Follow Me," I like to think he also says, "Let's Eat."

Prayer

Just as You imbue all things with Your Spirit, including that which we consume, may we see that we follow You when we celebrate in our community by the holy directive of eating, drinking, and being merry.